

## Africa Multiple Cluster's Gender and Diversity Office presents the *ICDL Lecture and Workshop Series (Event No. 3)*

**Melissa Steyn**

**Thursday, 9 July 2020. 2-4 PM**

[Digital Format (ZOOM) in Knowledge Lab]

A Fulbright alumnus, **Melissa Steyn** holds the SARChI Chair in Critical Diversity Studies at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. She has been developing Diversity Studies as a field in Higher Education, first at the University of Cape Town and more recently as the founding director of the Wits Centre for Diversity Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Melissa is a recipient of the University of Cape Town's Distinguished Teacher's Award (2009), and the South African Council for Higher Education National Excellence in Teaching Award (2010). She holds a University of Southampton Diamond Jubilee International Fellowship.

Her work engages with intersecting hegemonic social formations, but she is best known for her publications on whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa. Her book, *Whiteness just isn't what is used to be: White identity in a changing South Africa* (2001, SUNY Press,) won the 2002 Outstanding Scholarship Award in International and Intercultural Communication from the National Communication Association in the United States. Melissa has six edited/co-edited books and was featured as one of Routledge's Sociology Super Authors for 2013.

Some of her most recent works include

- Diagnosing Organizational Body-Scapes: A Model for Transformation Tested in South Africa's National Research Foundation. In *International Journal of Organizational Diversity* 19(1):1-17 · January 2019 [Published with Haley McEwen, & Jennie Tsekwa]
- Hyperracialized: Interracial Relationships in Post-Apartheid South Africa. In *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (2018), Vol 40(10). [Published with Haley McEwen, & Jennie Tsekwa]
- Diversity in Basic Education in South Africa: Intersectionality and Critical Diversity Literacy. In *Africa Education Review* 14(1):1-14. September 2017, published with Finn Reygan
- A chapter in the 2018 book *Whiteness Afrikaans Afrikaners: Addressing Post Apartheid Legacies, Privileges and Burdens, Entitled Whiteness: Post-Apartheid, Decolonial*. [Publisher: The Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection]

**The following text was sent round to the Cluster members for preparation:**

Melissa Steyn. 'Critical Diversity Literacy: Essentials for the Twenty-First Century. In *Routledge International Handbook of Diversity Studies*. Ed. Steven Vertovec. London: Routledge. 2015. 379-389

## Title and Abstract

### **New Norms for a New Era: Critical Diversity Literacy**

Prof. Steyn addresses the applicability of the principles of Critical Diversity Literacy to the current political context of COVID 19 and #BlackLivesMatter, with a view to elucidating more conscious modes of scholarship as political praxis invested in decolonializing knowledge production processes. Operating from her own academic vantage point in critical whiteness studies in South Africa, Prof. Steyn addresses how white privilege influences the ways Black lives are led in what has come to be understood as an anti-Black world – and how knowledge about racialized bodies has historically been conceived of and disseminated. Understanding her own work in CDL as a work in progress, Prof. Steyn provides a set of principles, as a teaching tool, subject to further development and nuance. She advocates this as a flexible analytical tool congruent with intersectional approaches, to elucidate the operations of privilege and oppression along axes of difference.

1. *An understanding of the role of power in constructing differences that make a difference.*
2. *A recognition of the unequal symbolic and material value of different social locations. This includes acknowledging hegemonic positionalities and concomitant identities, such as whiteness, heterosexuality, masculinity, cisgender, ablebodiedness, middleclassness, etc. And how these dominant orders position those in non-hegemonic spaces.*
3. *Analytic skill in unpacking how these systems of oppression intersect, interlock, co-construct and constitute each other, and how they are reproduced, resisted and reframed.*
4. *A definition of oppressive systems such as racism as current social problems and (not only) a historical legacy.*
5. *An understanding that social identities are learned and are an outcome of social practices.*
6. *The possession of a diversity grammar and a vocabulary that facilitates a discussion of privilege and oppression*
7. *The ability to 'translate' (see through) and interpret coded hegemonic practices.*
8. *An analysis of the ways that diversity hierarchies and institutionalised oppressions are inflected through specific social contexts and material arrangements.*
9. *An understanding of the role of emotions, including our own emotional investment, in all of the above.*
10. *An engagement with issues of the transformation of oppressive systems towards deepening social justice at all levels of social organization. (381-388).*

- Melissa Steyn. 'Critical Diversity Literacy: Essentials for the Twenty-First Century. In *Routledge International Handbook of Diversity Studies*. Ed. Steven Vertovec. London: Routledge. 2015. 379-389.

### **Post-Lecture Activity**

After the lecture, the discussion was driven by the thought impulses on the text provided by the following discussants:

- Prof. Catherine Kiprop, Associate Professor for Education Management and Leadership, Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya. Prof. Kiprop is also the Director of the Institute for Gender Equity, Research and Development and holds the GDO function for this ACC.
- Prof. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Professor of the Epistemologies of the Global South, University of Bayreuth, Germany.